

Dear Mr. Dowdy:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Tiptonville, Tennessee, on August 18, 2003. The Commission is pleased that you are satisfied with the assistance, cooperation, and support that the Memphis District has provided. In your statement you discussed several topics, including the St. Francis Basin project, the need for the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project, our Nation's infrastructure needs, and the push toward outsourcing.

The hydraulic studies in the St. Francis Basin between the Missouri-Arkansas state line and the Marked Tree Siphon should be completed in December 2003. As requested, the Memphis District will advise you of those results. Future maintenance work will be planned based on the results and local input.

A hydraulic analysis is ongoing for the portion of Castor River between Highway 25 near Aquilla and the confluence with Ditch No. 1. There have been delays in completing the analysis and results are now expected to be available in January 2004. If the results of the analysis reveal that the channel capacity has diminished by at least 20 percent, plans and specifications for cleanout will be initiated. If that portion of Ditch No. 1 above Highway 60 can be added to this study without further delaying those results, we will certainly add it to the study.

-2-

The Memphis District currently has a multi-year indefinite delivery and indefinite quantity aerial herbicide contract. While the District understands your concern about the impact of vegetation on ditch banks, we have guidelines that are used to determine when and how channels are treated.

Generally, once a channel has been cleared, it is included in the herbicide program rotation. Most channels with large bottom widths (150 feet or greater) are not scheduled for treatment because tree growth on those banks does not hinder channel flows. Likewise, channels with old-growth trees on the banks are not scheduled for herbicide treatment due to the

ineffectiveness of herbicide on large trees. With these guidelines in mind, the District will continue to execute this program to the extent funding and priority permit.

The Commission recognizes your concerns about annual funding levels of the St. Francis Basin maintenance project. We appreciate your efforts and those of your board in securing additional funding for the project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will continue to execute work in the St. Francis Basin to the extent funding and priority permit.

We concur in your assessment that the MR&T project is vital to our Nation and should be completed and properly maintained.

The Commission will continue to listen to you and to all of our partners regarding the concerns of our Nation's infrastructure, particularly those existing within the Mississippi River Valley. The Commission is keenly aware of the need for improvements in the area of water resources infrastructure and will continue to seek ways to leverage our technical capabilities in assisting the Nation to resolve these critical issues.

The President has directed all Federal agencies to open as many commercially available services to competition through outsourcing as part of his Presidential Management Agenda to assure the best value to the taxpayer. The requirement is to compete the function, not necessarily to outsource. In competitions to date, the Federal agency has won the majority

-3-

of the time. In implementing this program, the Corps has been sensitive to the needs of its missions, including the need to maintain a high level of technical expertise. The Corps depends on contractors to execute much of its work under the oversight of its engineers and scientists. Under the current plan to open certain functions to commercial competition, core expertise has been specifically exempted from competition.

The Commission is committed to continual improvement in the execution of its mission through an adequate and capable work force. We recognize and appreciate the valuable contribution of

the many local levee and drainage districts, such as the Little River Drainage District, who are our partners in this mission.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission